



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

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AUG 30 2005

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

B-19J

Mr. Don Hultman
Refuge Manager
United States Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge
51 E. Fourth Street
Room 101
Winona, Minnesota 55987

RE: Comments for Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge EIS NO. 20050187

Dear Mr. Hultman:


In accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), Region 5 has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Refuge). The Refuge was established by an Act of Congress in 1924 to provide a safe haven and breeding place for migratory birds, fish, and other wildlife. The Refuge consists of 240,000 acres of Mississippi River floodplain along 261 river miles from Wabasha, Minnesota to Rock Island, Illinois. The CCP will help ensure that this Refuge will contribute to fulfilling the overall mission of the Refuge system. This Draft EIS considered four alternatives that would guide the management and administration of the Refuge for the next 15 years. These alternatives consist of: 1.) No Action, 2.) Wildlife Focus, 3.) Public Use Focus, and 4.) Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus. Your agency has designated the alternative "Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus" as the Preferred Alternative.

Based on our review, we have rated the Draft EIS as "LO". The "LO" indicates that we have a lack of objection and did not identify the need for additional information or environmental issues to be considered. However, we recommend that the Final EIS provide a narrative that explains how your agency will integrate the CCP for the Refuge with the Upper Mississippi River Navigation Ecosystem Sustainability Program, lead by the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

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Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft EIS and Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Al Fenedick of my staff. Al can be reached at 312 886-6872 or by E-mail at Fenedick.al@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth A. Westlake", written in a cursive style.

Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief
NEPA Implementation Section
Office of Science Ecosystems and Communities